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THE
S P E E C H
OF
William Howard,

Late
Lord Viscount Stafford;



*Upon the Scaffold on Tower-Hill, immediately be-
fore his Execution, Wednesday, Decemb. 29.
1680.*

BY the Permission of Almighty God, I am this day brought
hither to suffer Death, as if I were guilty of High Treason:
I do most truly, in the Presence of the Eternal, Omnipotent,
and All-knowing GOD, protest upon my Salvation,
That I am as Innocent as it is possible for any man to be, so much
as in a Thought, of the Crimes laid to my Charge.
I acknowledg it to be a particular Grace and Favour of the Ho-
ly Trinity, to have given me this long Time to prepare my self for
Eternity: I have not made so good use of that Grace as I ought to
have done, partly by my not having recollected my self as I might
have done, and partly because, not only my Friends, but my Wife and
Children, have for several daies been forbid to see me; but in the
presence of one of my Warders. This hath been a great Trouble
and Distraction unto me: but I hope God of his Infinite Mercy will
pardon my Defaults, and accept of my good Intentions.

Since my long Imprisonment, I have considered often what could
be the Original Cause of my being thus accused; since I know my
self not culpable, so much as in a Thought; and I cannot believe
it to be upon any other Account, than my being of the Church of
Rome. I have no Reason to be ashamed of my Religion; for it
teacheth nothing but the Right Worship of God, Obedience to the
King, and due Subordination to the Temporal Laws of the King-
dom: And I do submit to the Articles of Faith believed and taught
in the Catholick Church, believing them to be most consonant to
the Word of God. And whereas it hath so much and often been
objected, that the Church holds, That Sovereign Princes Excom-
municate, and excommunicate, I would not have any other who have
been

municated by the Pope, may by their Subjects be Deposed and Murdered; as to the Murder of princes, I have been Taught as a matter of Faith in the Catholick Faith, that such Doctrine is diabolical, horrid and detestable, and contrary to the Law of God, Nature and Nations; and as such, from my heart I renounce and abominate it. As for the Doctrine of Deposing Princes, I know some Divines of the Catholick Church hold it, but as able and learned as they have writ against it: but it was not pretended to be the Doctrine of the Church, that is, any point of Catholick Faith: wherefore I do here in my Conscience declare, That tis my true and real Judgment, That the same Doctrine of Deposing Kings is contrary to the Fundamental Laws of this Kingdom, injurious to Sovereign Power, and consequently would be in me, or any other of his Majesties Subjects, impious and damnable. I believe and profess, that there is one God, one Saviour, one Holy Catholick Church, of which, through the Mercy, Grace and Goodness of God, I die a Member.

To my great and unspeakable Grief, I have offended God in many things, by many great Offences; But I give him most humble thanks, not in any of those Crimes of which I was accused.

All the Members of either House having liberty to propose in the House what they think fit for the good of the Kingdom, accordingly I proposed what I thought fit: the House is Judge of the fitness or unfitness of it, and I think I never said any thing that was unfitting there, or contrary to the Law and use of Parliament; for certainly if I had, the Lords would, as they might, have some way punished me: So I am not culpable before God or Man.

It is much reported of Indulgences, Dispensations, Pardons, to Murder, Rebel, Lye, forswear, and commit such other Crimes held and given in the Church. I do here profess in the presence of God, I never learned, believed, or practised any such things, but the contrary; and I speak this without any Equivocation or Reservation whatsoever. And certainly were I guilty either my self, or knew of any one that were guilty, whosoever that were, of any of those Crimes of which I am accused, I were not only the greatest Fool imaginable, but a perfect Madman, and as wicked as any of those that so falsely have accused me, if I should not discover any ill design I knew in any kind, and so upon discovery save my Life, I having so often had so fair occasions proposed unto me, and for am guilty of Self-murder, which is a most grievous and heinous sin. And though I was last impeached at the Lords Bar, yet I have great grounds to believe that I was first brought to Tryal on the belief that to save my Life I would make some great Discovery; and truly so I would, had I known any such thing of an ill design, or illegal dangerous Plot, either of my self, or any other person whosoever, without exception. But had I a thousand Lives, I would lose them all, rather than falsely accuse either my self, or any other whosoever: And if I had

had known of any Treason, and should thus deny it, as I do now upon my Salvation at this time, I should have no hope of Salvation, which now I have through the Merits of Christ Jesus.

I do beseech God to bless his Majesty, who is my lawful King and Sovereign, who I was always by all Laws Humane and Divine, bound to obey: and I am sure that no Power upon Earth, either singly or all together can legally allow me or any body else to lift a hand against him or his Legal Authority. I do hold that the Constitution of the Government of this Kingdom is the only way to continue Peace and quietness; which God long continue.

Next to Treason, I hold Murder in abhorrence, and have ever done, and do: and I do sincerely profess, that if I could at this time free my self immediately, and establish what Religion I would, and what Government I would, and make my self as Great as I could wish, and all by the death of one of those Fellows that by their Perjuries have brought me to the place where I am, I so much abhor to be the cause of any mans Death, that I would not any way be the cause of their Murder: How much less would I endeavour the Assassination of his Majesty, whom I hold to be as Gracious a King as ever this or any other Nation had, and under whom the People may enjoy their Liberties as much as ever any did: and if it please God to grant him Life and Happiness, according as I have always wished and prayed for, I am morally perswaded that he and all his Dominions will be as happy and prosperous as ever People were: which I beseech God grant.

I do most humbly ask pardon of the Almighty and All-merciful God, for all the great offences I have committed against his Divine Majesty; and I know he would not have the death and confusion of a sinner, but that he may repent and live: in that assurance I hope, knowing he never despiseth a contrite Heart; and though I have not so feeling a Contrition as I would, yet I have it as well as I can, and I doubt not but that God will accept of the good will.

I do desire that all people will forgive me any injury that I have done them in any thing either wilfully or by chance; and I do heartily forgive all people in the world that have injured me; I forgive even those Perjured men that so falsely have brought me hither by their Perjury.

I do now upon my Death and Salvation aver, that I never spoke one word either unto *Oates* or *Turbervill*, or to my knowledge ever saw them until my Trial; and for *Dugdale*, I never spoke unto him of any thing but about a Foot-boy, or Foot-man, or Foot-race; and never was then alone with him. All the punishment that I wish them, is, that they may repent and acknowledge the wrong they have done me; then it will appear how Innocent I am. God forgive them! I have a great confidence that it will please Almighty God, and that he will in a short time bring Truth to light; then you and all the world will see and know what injury they have done me.

I hope I have made it appear that I have some Conscience: for if I had none, certainly I would have saved my Life by acknowledging my self guilty, which I could have done, tho I know I am not in the least Guilty. And I having some Conscience, make very ill use of it; for I throw my self into eternal Pain by thus plainly and constantly denying thus at my Death, the Knowledge of what I am accused of in the least.

I have said thus much in discharge of my Conscience, and do aver upon my Salvation, what I have said to be really true.

I shall say little of my Trial, and whether it were all according to the known Law, I am too much a Party to say much of it: if it were not so, God forgive him or them that were the cause of it.

My Judges were all Persons of Honour, who were all as much bound to judge rightly, as if they had been upon Oath upon what was legally proved, and not to Vote but according as in their Consciences they were satisfied, and if any of them did otherwise upon any account whatsoever, I beseech God forgive them, I do so heartily.

I shall end with my hearty Prayers for the happiness of his Majesty, that he may enjoy all happiness in this world and the world to come, and govern his People according to the Laws of God, and that the People may be sensible what a Blessing God hath so miraculously given them, and obey him as they ought. I ask Pardon with a prostrate heart of Almighty God, for all the great Offences that I have committed against his Divine Majesty, and hope through the Merits and Passion of Christ Jesus to obtain everlasting Happiness, into whose hands I commit my Spirit, asking Pardon of every person that I have done any wrong unto: I do freely forgive all that have any ways wronged me: I do with all the Devotion and Repentance that I can, humbly invoke the Mercy of our Blessed Saviour.

I beseech God not to revenge my Innocent blood on the Nation, nor those that were the Causes of it, with my last Breath. I do with my last Breath truly assert my Innocency, and hope the Omnipotent Allseeing Just God will deal with me accordingly.

F I N I S.